

Along with these treasures infiltrates occasional family trash. "Into every genealogy, a little rain must fall," our brother warns us. We gasp to read that our mother's brother was found in the gutter dead from drink or that great granddad lost multitudes of brain cells in later years. So we brace ourselves for each upcoming volume of family lore. We hold our collective breath and hope that his latest dig won't reveal anything worse than last time. When the new volume appears, it reads more dramatically than a soap opera, more traumatically than an emergency room, and more radically than we dreamed. What we assumed was the Perfect Family has made a distinct detour: Alcoholic grandpas, crazy grandmas, stuttering uncles, runaway aunts, and fat-nose cousins flood the pages of our family history. In despair, the family meets at a reunion over the summer. We discuss the genealogy research, its progress, its past repercussions, and its future possibilities. "We want you to find the kings in our family tree," we plead. "No more outlaws, saloon shooters, or babies born with six toes on each foot." Our brother looks shocked. "That's the way it goes," he explains. "They're black sheep in every family." "Agreed," we say, "but you've turned up a whole flock of black sheep. You can do better than that. We can't take any more! Give us some people we can brag about. We